R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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MICRO-TEACHING--A PROMISING MEDIUM FOR TEACHER TRAINING.

BY- DUGAS, DONALD G.
NATIONAL FED. OF MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSN.

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DESCRIPTORS- *MICROTEACHING, *LANGUAGE PROGRAMS, *VIDEO TAPE RECORDINGS, *INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION, *TEACHING TECHNIQUES, TEACHER EDUCATION, PRESERVICE EDUCATION, DEMONSTRATIONS (EDUCATIONAL), RETRAINING, LANGUAGE SKILLS, TEACHING QUALITY, SELF EVALUATION, INSTITUTES (TRAINING PROGRAMS), EFFECTIVE TEACHING, NDEA LANGUAGE INSTITUTES,

THAT MICRO-TEACHING CAN BE USED EFFECTIVELY FOR TEACHER TRAINING AND RETRAINING WAS INDICATED BY A 1966 NDEA INSTITUTE WHERE PARTICIPANTS VIEWED ON VIDEO-TAPE AND DISCUSSED THE WORK OF A TEACHER IN A SMALL DEMONSTRATION CLASS OF HIGH SCHOOL FRENCH. EACH MEMBER HIMSELF TAUGHT TWO 15-MINUTE CLASS SEGMENTS OF THE SAME CLASS, WHICH WAS ALSO VIDEO-TAPED. BY HAVING THE TEACHER VIEW HIS OWN TAPES, HE COULD MORE FULLY APPRECIATE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM OFFERED BY OTHERS, RECOGNIZE HIS OWN STRONG AND WEAK POINTS, AND LEARN TO EVALUATE HIS OWN PERFORMANCE AS A TEACHER. CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE INSTITUTE'S WORK INDICATED THAT (1) MICRO-TEACHING IS AN EFFECTIVE DEVICE IN RETRAINING EXPERIENCED TEACHERS, (2) IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE HOW ADAPTABLE MICRO-TEACHING IS TO ADVANCED-LEVEL COURSES WHERE THE SUBJECT MATTER IS STILL ONLY VAGUELY DEFINED, (3) THE VIDEO-TAPED RECORDINGS ARE AN EXCELLENT MEANS OF STUDYING A PARTICIPANT'S GRAMMAR AND PHONOLOGY, AND AN IDEAL BASIS FOR CREATING REMEDIAL MATERIALS. A PARTIAL EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY IS INCLUDED. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 51, NUMBER 3, MARCH 1967, PAGES 161-166. (AUTHOR/SS)

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Micro-Teaching: A Promising Medium for Teacher Retraining

DONALD G. DUGAS, *University of Michigan*

THIS article has two goals: 1) to relate in some detail our experience with micro-teaching and evaluate its usefulness in advanced level retraining programs; 2) to comment on the exciting potential of micro-teaching as a tool for generating discussion on the goals and methods of the advanced language class.

Micro-teaching is a recent development. To this author's knowledge, Robert L. Politzer is the only one to have discussed its use in the training of language teachers.[1]

A modified[2] version of micro-teaching was used during the 1966 NDEA Institute for Advanced Studies in French at the University of Michigan. This Institute was designed to equip the high school language teacher to meet some of the problems he faced in teaching advanced level courses dealing with literature, style, and culture.[3]

When it was decided to use this concept with the 40 potential participants, three objectives were evident: 1) to establish how effective micro-teaching might be in retraining experienced teachers; 2) to learn how adaptable this concept might be to advanced-level courses where the subject matter is still only vaguely defined; 3) to discover what could be learned from recordings of better-than-average teaching.

This decision to video-tape the participants grew out of previous experience in making a training-discussion film for the teaching fellows working with the French Pilot Project, at the University of Michigan.[4] It is paradoxical that a profession which claims superior skill in developing complex behavior in its students (i.e. language learning) seems deficient in techniques for developing equally well complex behaviors in its teachers (i.e. language teaching). Clearly, the teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical skill need not and, sadly, often do not correlate positively. The Pilot Project film as well as the micro-teaching that was carried out this summer were both experiments in improving the teacher's classroom behavior.

Procedure

Originally we had planned to video-tape each participant as he taught three fifteen-minute segments to a class of 12 demonstration students. However, because of an unfortunate lack of time and television facilities, each participant had occasion to teach only two classes and, therefore, to cover only two areas.

During these segments, the trainee was required to teach a micro-class on either culture, style, or literature. Because he attended classes in each of these three areas as part of the Institute, we were merely asking him to relate this training to his teaching. Therefore we did not feel it necessary to provide him with detailed class outlines to work from.

During the first week of the Institute, the participants gathered in a large room of the

[1] Robert L. Politzer, "Toward a Practice-Centered Program for the Training and Evaluation of Foreign Language Teachers," *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. L, No. 5 (May 1966), pp. 251–255, and Politzer, *Practice-Centered Teacher Training: French*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961; mimeographed, 1966.

[2] The following features which are suggested by Politzer were omitted: 1) the trainees were not given instruction in any specific "teaching skill" that had to be applied in the next teaching session: 2) the teaching lesson was not ready-made for the trainees but was developed in committee, as described later: 3) the demonstration class did not offer the trainees immediate feedback about their own teaching; 4) the participants were not required to re-teach a badly taught class as soon as the critique had been made.

[3] The decision to try micro-teaching at this NDEA Institute resulted from discussions among Harlan Lane, Director of the Center, Jean Carduner, Director of the Institute, Guy Capelle, George Geis, Steve Knapp and myself. I wish to thank George Geis for reading this article and suggesting many improvements.

[4] This film, sponsored by the Center for Research on Language and Language Behavior, included selected segments of video-taped elementary French classes.

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University's English Language Institute to watch, via television, a demonstration class taught by Mrs. Jacqueline Elliott, assistant professor of Romance Languages at the University of Tennessee. This class was attended by twelve local high school students who had previously studied French for an average of seven years. Their class met every day for two consecutive hours.

The participants viewed the first class every day during the first week, and after that, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. During the second hour, a staff member, who was present during the demonstration, led a discussion on the teaching that had just been viewed. Meanwhile, the demonstration teacher was either teaching her second class or supervising a participant's teaching and was not present at these discussions. This is a departure from normal Institute procedure which can cause some anxiety on the part of the demonstration teacher. However, it was hoped that under such conditions, the participants could be induced to discuss the class more candidly, so that, as a group they would formulate objectives for advanced level courses. At the same time, they would learn what teaching competencies would be expected of them when they in turn came to teach.

After the first week of class, three participants were excused from these discussion periods to teach fifteen-minute segments of the second class-hour. These teacher-participants were informed a week ahead of time as to the time and subject-matter of their micro-class. Mrs. Elliott did this through mimeographed teaching schedules which stated: a) the text assignment for the day, which was focused on a literary selection; b) the names of the three participants assigned to teach each of the three subdivisions (literature, style, or culture); c) the names of three alternates who were to work with the teacher-designates and replace them in case of illness.

These six people (the teacher-designates and their alternates) would meet in committee to plan the class hour in detail. It soon came out in the discussion, however, that not all literary texts could be discussed in terms of culture. Consequently, more time was given over to language problems and less to civilization.

Filming and Evaluation: The First Cycle

The participants' teaching was video-taped via remote control by the author and an engineer. There were two cameras in the classroom: one affixed to the front wall above the blackboard, which could pan on the students; and a second, on the back wall, which followed the teacher. The image transmitted by each camera was carried to a monitor where the author contiuously selected, by pushing a button, which of the two pictures he wanted video-taped at any moment. As he did this, he also took notes relating to the teacher-participant's performance in two areas: his command of the language and his methodology. The demonstration teacher, who was in the classroom, also took notes for a future critique.

During the lunch hour which followed, Mrs. Elliott presented her comments to these teachers as a group. If her reaction to an individual's performance was particularly negative, she discussed it with him in private.

Meanwhile, the author reviewed his own notes and filled out two evaluational checksheets on each teacher. The first, of a single page, listed in detail any phonological or grammatical errors committed by the teacher. The second, an extensive checklist, was used to indicate what approach and techniques the teacher employed. A portion of this checklist is presented as an appendix to this article.

This second list reflected observations on the teaching in one of the three areas of culture, language, or literature. Half of the first page was left blank for the evaluator's comments. It should perhaps be noted that the checklist was devised, not only as an efficient means of evaluation, but also as a way of showing the teachers which other methods could have been used to teach the same material.

These evaluation checklists were given to the teachers on the following day, before their 8:00 A.M. class. They were expected to read it before seeing themselves on television at 10:00 A.M.

Thus, before the viewing session, each participant received two critiques; one oral and of a general nature, the other written and detailed.

During the viewing, only the author was permitted to look on with the participant. This guarantee of privacy probably alleviated some

feelings of anxiety among the teachers involved. Only at the end of the session did we show some of the video-tapes to everyone. We chose what we thought were examples of good teaching and obtained permission from the teachers involved to show their classes to the rest of the institute.

After the author and the teacher had viewed the previous day's performance, we spent a little time discussing this teaching. Here, the author would amend his evaluation, where applicable, and make any necessary explanations. (For example, some participants could not read phonetic script and consequently had difficulty following the comments made about their pronunciation.)

Unfortunately, the schedule did not allow for much discussion after these viewings. It would have been desirable to have had more time so that the participant could have discussed freely any problems or thoughts engendered by the training cycle.

The Second Cycle

During the first cycle we recorded mostly the teacher's actions. The second time, however, we tried to show any interesting student reactions. This procedure can be especially helpful if the teacher does not seem sensitive to his effect on the class.

After the second micro-class we went through the same evaluation sessions with one important difference: the author did not give a written critique to the teacher. Instead, before we viewed the video-tape, he would attempt to elicit from the participant a self-evaluation of sorts. This was done by having him answer questions which showed: 1) if he was clearly aware of his goals; 2) if he had consciously used the most preferable means to achieve these goals; 3) whether or not he had achieved his goals; and 4) how he knew that he had or had not succeeded. Only then was he shown the video-tape. After the viewing, attempts were made to lead the teacher-participant to see where his pre-viewing observations did and did not coincide with the record.

The purpose of this activity was to lead the teacher to be more conscious of his classroom behavior. The Institute staff would not be following him back to his school. Yet we wanted some assurance that he was capable of meaningful self-evaluation. Only then could we feel that his growth as a teacher might continue.

Micro-Teaching and Evaluation

So far, we have been discussing micro-teaching as a training device. There is also something to be said in its favor as a testing tool.

There seem to be two ways in which micro-teaching could be used to evaluate the success of an Institute or any other training program, for that matter. The first would be to have the teacher-participant teach a third micro-class. We could then ask him to make a completely independent self-evaluation of his performance in that class. Ideally, he would be allowed to see his video-tape before handing in his critique. At the same time, a staff member would also write a critique according to a set of well-defined objectives. The student's final grade could then be based on how well his self-evaluation correlated with that of the staff member. Thus he would not be graded on the quality of his teaching, but rather on his ability to find his strengths and shortcomings.

Such an approach implies that we improve classroom behavior by training teachers to evaluate their classroom activity. It assumes that content is not a problem, and that progress will occur once we are assured that our participants possess a well-defined self-evaluational procedure.

A second and more satisfactory method of evaluating both the participant and the Instititute, is to have the teacher's performance evaluated by a board of specialists. That is, we could have the literature professor evaluate his performance in this domain, the linguist, his control of the language and his performance in treating style, the methodologist, his ability to evaluate himself, etc. This method assumes that content should indeed be tested, but not on paper. That is not the way things happen in a language classroom. This, we suggest, would be a more realistic method—though difficult—of evaluating our success. Such an approach would probably require that we measured the improvement between the participant's teaching of his first micro-class and that of the third.

The Demonstration Class

As we stated previously, the students in the

demonstration class had had, on an average, seven years of class contact with French. It is also interesting to note that five had been to France, most for a full year. This suggests that these students were perhaps too well prepared for our purposes. It is my contention that we skirted some important problems because of this. The ideal class has its place. It shows us where we are trying to go. However, it also helps us forget what problems must be faced in getting the students to an advanced level of language proficiency. It is good to see a model of an advanced course. It is also profitable to see the current ideal of an elementary pattern drill course. But what happens in between? What are the most meaningful and effective ways of leading students from the elementary language class to the literature course? The ideal class has its value, but right now we could probably contribute more to our profession by looking at more average third and fourth year classes and tackling some of the problems at this level.

At the beginning of this article, three objectives in trying micro-teaching were stated. In relation to the first we can state unambiguously that micro-teaching is effective in retraining experienced teachers. Of the 39 participants who filled out the Institute evaluation questionnaire, 38 said that the video-taped micro-teaching was definitely helpful. Many participants liked the idea so much that, when queried, after their second teaching cycle, they requested that, in the future, we institute three cycles.

The staff also had positive reaction to the use of micro-teaching. Those involved in retraining and evaluation saw a noticeable improvement in the participants' teaching between the first and second cycles.

So we endorse micro-teaching for retraining purposes. However, in the future, we recommend that the more a participant is filmed, the more the cameras focus on his students. This would be especially helpful if the teacher resorts frequently to what psychologists call "avoidance behavior." It is so easy for a teacher to avoid facing classroom problems by camouflaging an escape mechanism as teaching—"We don't have time for that question today," etc. Since he is running the class, it is a simple thing for him to turn away from difficult situations. But, as a television viewer, he is just sitting there. He is forced to look at the effect he has on his students. He can not easily avoid it. This can hurt. For example, during one class, we recorded the students for a fairly long segment, without any intentional forethought. During the viewing, the teacher became so uncomfortable upon seeing his students' reactions that he was visibly compelled to turn away from the screen and groan. He is probably more sensitive to his students' behavior now. Needless to say we must be very careful with whom we use such a tactic.

We said that our second purpose in trying micro-teaching was to see if it was workable at a higher content level of instruction. Here our conclusions are not clear-cut. We feel that the subject matter can be broken down into fifteen minute segments. However, our previous idea on segmenting each class hour into three neat areas of literature, culture, and language is not always workable.

Our participants had difficulty preparing their teaching according to our dictates. This was especially true because they had to find culture units to mesh with every text assigned. We need to find alternatives to our schema.

Perhaps we should consider scheduling class time for staff members to work along with these participants in the preparation of such materials. This could help generate more dialogue between the high school and college people on some of the problems involved. There is an urgent need for this now. Most of the experts in the fields of literature and civilization are in the colleges. These professors are often unaware of the stumbling blocks that the average high-school teacher faces. It is therefore difficult for these college people to address themselves meaningfully to the needs of the high-school teacher. So, their potential as an innovative force remains untapped, for the most part.

To foster more meaningful dialogue between these two groups of teachers, we must encourage the college professors to become more aware of the reality of the high-school class room. We can accomplish this in two ways: a) by showing them video-taped recordings of normal classes in session; b) by having them work with high school teachers in preparing materials and allowing them to see the teacher

teach those materials. If we could do this, the participants might lead these experts to refine their definitions of "a good literature class" or "a good civilization class" in terms of realistic high-school norms. In exchange, the experts could help teachers become more creative in their approach to culture and literature.

The third reason we used micro-teaching was to see if there was any value in keeping records of teaching. There certainly is. We found that these records provided an excellent means of studying a participant's command of grammar and phonology, an ideal basis for creating remedial materials. Not only that. The speaking subject was being evaluated in his natural milieu. We were grading his normal use of French, not an artifact that we had created for testing purposes.

We also learned that re-viewing the tapes made it more possible for the evaluator to be fair in his critiques. One-shot appraisals can sometimes be too stringent or too charitable. A re-viewing after a twenty-four hour break, in the presence of the teacher being evaluated, increases the probability that the evaluation will be balanced. If the evaluator is willing to admit his own fallibility, he has paid a small price in exchange for the teacher's confidence.

Finally, this experience has led us to believe that our profession should begin filming or taping micro-classes taught by the best teachers available. Such records would be invaluable in training or retraining programs. NDEA Institutes now use demonstration teachers as models. However, no matter how good this model, participants often know what to expect from him after a week or two (unless, of course, they are unfamiliar with the class content). They learn this by observing: a) the content that this teacher likes to stress; b) his favorite methods; c) the way he uses his personality in the classroom.

Yet, there are many areas of content and these are only vaguely defined, especially at the advanced level. Besides, there is certainly more than one set of effective teaching methods for each level. We seem to forget this. The fact is that in discussions on language teaching we can often detect implicit references to "*the* method." When one speaks of "*the* method," he chooses to neglect the fact that he is dealing with people. He chooses to gloss over the fact that there may be differences of personality, taste, and inclination among students and between teachers and students. He chooses to disregard the possibility that some students may really be eye-minded and others ear-minded etc. and not equally receptive to the same teacher presentation.

What I am suggesting is that we need to observe more outstanding teachers, including —and perhaps *especially*—those who are not teaching according to common accepted practices. Why could we not film or video-tape these different but outstanding types as they teach the same content? The University of Michigan Television Center recently did something similar for the legal profession. Three outstanding lawyers were given identical facts to a case and asked to prepare briefs for mock trials, without collusion. The trials were filmed and shown at a recent convention, at which other lawyers *paid* to see them. This experience no doubt helped the lawyers in attendance to sharpen their hypotheses about good trial procedure. Why could we not do the same for language teaching?

Editor's Note

The potential of the portable video-tape recorder and playback is still untapped and uncharted. As instruments of this type are being perfected and produced at costs compatible with educational budget allowances, they will become most valuable in the whole foreign language teacher training and professional development. Widespread use of these recorders would make it possible for teacher training supervisors to exchange tapes and build libraries, to develop highly professional techniques of supervision and evaluation, but most important, to expose all teachers to a system of self-examination. Teachers at all levels would benefit because professional development would be expanded into a system of shared experiences rather than the subjective one-to-one relationship of teacher and supervising critic.—R.F.R.

APPENDIX

EVALUATION CHECKLIST*

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

VOCABULARY_____ Text studied_____

I. *Goals*

A. Statement of the goals

____ 1. to have the student understand new vocabulary

____ a. whenever he hears it.

____ b. whenever he sees it.

____ c. both of the above.

____ 2. to have the student understand and internalize new vocabulary, so that he can use it in speech and/or writing.

____ 3. to lead the student to understand the vocabulary

____ a. within a specified context.

____ b. in any context.

____ c. without any context.

B. Clarification of the goals to the class.

____ 1. goals never stated explicitly.

____ 2. goals stated explicitly.

____ a. at the beginning of the class.

____ b. at the end of the class.

II. *Presentation of the New Vocabulary*

A. Media:

____ 1. English translations or definitions.

____ 2. French definitions.

____ 3. drawings or pictures.

____ 4. pantomime.

____ 5. anecdotes.

____ 6. a series of French sentences where the same word is used with the same meaning.

____ 7. other

B. Time of presentation

____ 1. before the students saw/heard the text.

____ 2. after they had seen/heard the text.

C. Teacher's use of French:

____ 1. French at any cost.

____ 2. English used

____ a. to translate a few words.

____ b. to make an explanation.

III. *Checking aquisition of the materials*

A. Teacher check by having the students

____ 1. say that they understood.

____ 2. repeat the words.

____ 3. underline the words as they saw them in another passage.

____ 4. underline the words each time they saw them used with the same meaning in a different passage.

____ 5. write the words every time he heard the teacher say them.

____ 6. translate the words

____ a. in a context.

____ b. as part of a list.

____ 7. define the word in French.

____ 8. use the word in a different sentence.

____ 9. tell an anecdote which illustrates the meaning of the word.

____ 10. complete a "cloze" type exercise.

____ 11. prepare a "cloze" type exercise as a test for other students.

____ 12. other _____

_____

B. Had the teacher's presentation prepared the student for the type of checking used?

____ Yes ____ No

C. How many students were required to show that

____ 1. they had understood? _____ percent.

____ 2. they could use the new vocabulary? _____ percent.

D.

____ 1. How many of the above were reinforced for their correct responses? _____ percent.

____ 2. How were they generally reinforced?

_____

_____

____ 3. How perfect an answer did they have to give before they were reinforced? _____

_____

____ 4. Did the teacher change his hierarchy of goals during the testing? (e.g. did he end up testing pronunciation instead of vocabulary?) _____

* No claims are made as to the comprehensiveness of this checklist. It is an expanded version of the one that was actually used but we don't doubt that something important could have been left out. As the heading indicates, this was a checklist on the teaching of vocabulary. This is a subsection of a larger section on the teaching of language and style.